

Ruth Krall. *Living on the Edge of the Edge: Letters to a Younger Colleague*. Victoria, BC: Friesen Press, 2017.

Ruth Krall writes this book from a number of edges: she is on the edge of the Anabaptist Mennonite community, on the edge of a long and varied academic career, and on the edge of a life of peace advocacy around abuse issues. From this vantage point, she has written a series of letters to her scholarly friend and fellow peace advocate Lisa Schirch.

The letters are not half of an actual real-time correspondence. Rather, themes suggested in correspondence with Schirch prompted Krall to write these reflective letters. Schirch is the named reader, but they were written for a wider audience. This volume is peace theology in autobiographical form. The term “memoir” aptly describes it on several levels.

It is a spiritual memoir, for in it Krall reflects on a lifetime of spiritual influences, ranging from her childhood Mennonite faith community, to influential people she has met, to interfaith voices that have impacted her life. Her purpose is to encourage future feminists to pay attention to their own spirituality as they pursue peace advocacy.

It is also a theological memoir, where the author charts her own thinking about God, the church, and the problem of evil in the world, and how this has changed over time. Her theological reflections are notably interdisciplinary, drawing on experiences from her diverse career and wide reading in the fields of nursing, psychology, trauma theory, theology, and

world religions.

In addition it is a memoir of peace advocacy, recounting the costs and trials of being a voice for survivors of pastoral sexual misconduct, and offering tips and strategies for how to be effective and resilient as a peacemaker. Krall surveys the landscape of sexism and patriarchy in her lifetime, outlining the nature of violence that affects not only women and children but people of color, gender and sexual minorities, people who are differently abled, and others.

The letters are very personal. Krall tells stories of what she has seen and heard and experienced, believing that particularity and knowledge of oneself is a path to true dialogue and community. Her vulnerability, particularly in describing the pain of being shunned by the Mennonite community, is searing. By writing so personally, she speaks the pain of many who have been silenced and edged out of Mennonite communities because they dared to name violence.

The author encourages her readers to work on peace, not just in the world or in the church, but in their own psyches: “our own lives become the experiment in peace from which we can reach out to a world filled with violation and pain” (262). Themes of community come up frequently, and brokenness in community and shunning are recurrent themes, as are strength, resilience, hope, and healing.

Krall is an eloquent and insightful writer whose voice has been marginalized in the Mennonite community. She has charted her own course for some time, and this book is self-published (as is her excellent “The Elephants in God’s Living Room” on John Howard Yoder and clergy sexual abuse, which is available for free download at ruthkrall.com).

Some will find the book frustrating because it meanders and seems repetitive at points. Krall’s writing takes a spiral rather than a linear form. She begins discussion of a subject and then touches on it again in subsequent letters, each time coming at it from a slightly different angle. This reflects the trajectory of ideas in her life. I think feminist scholars will find it revelatory. I fear that the majority of Mennonite theologians, who tend to separate the personal from the theological, will find it irrelevant. And that is precisely why she wrote the book.

Living on the Edge of the Edge: Letters to a Younger Colleague will be a

book that women tell each other about, and it will sit on bedside tables for many years as feminists try to make sense of their lives. Its various letters will be useful for both graduate and undergraduate classes because Krall's engaging and poignant writing will speak to students, encouraging them to examine their own lives and beliefs, and spurring them to envision new directions for a world broken by abuses of power.

Carol Penner, Assistant Professor of Theological Studies, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario.